FIRST COMICS
DEC 54 1989
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ROGER SALICK • TIM VIGIL • JEFF
BADGER
TM
featuring a new BADGER short story by Mike BARON
LCR
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BADGER™

CREATED BY **MIKE BARON**

A self-styled crime fighter who rides the highways and by-ways of America, the **Badger** metes out bloody justice to jaywalkers, ticket scalpers, indifferent teenaged fast-food clerks, in fact, *any-damn-body he feels like because he's CRAZY!*

Badger is just one side of **Norbert Sykes**, a Vietnam veteran with a personality problem: It's split seven ways. Nevertheless, Norbert almost always finds himself in a Badger state of mind.

Badger is a master of Shorin-ryu and dozens of other obscure, esoteric, arcane, not to mention abstruse martial arts. He can also talk to the animals — just like Dr. Doolittle. Only with better results.

Badger lives with **Ham the Weather Wizard** in a castle south of Barneveld, Wisconsin. Ham and Badger met while both were inmates at a state mental hospital. Through cunning and chicanery, Ham has amassed a considerable fortune.

Badger calls everyone Larry.

Last Issue: Upon returning from Bolivia, Badger and **Mavis** found **Ham** enjoying a liaison with a new neighbor, **Shaza**. With a little female intuition and the fatal aid of **Edgar**, our heroes have discovered something is *very* wrong in the ziggurat next door, and have decided to investigate...

In **Badger Goes Berserk** #4: **Badger , Jessie** and **Larry** have a frank discussion. A special jam issue.

BADGER™ Vol. 1, No. 54, December 1989. Published by FIRST PUBLISHING, INC., OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 435 N. LaSalle, Chicago IL 60610. Published monthly. Copyright © 1989 First Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Price: $1.95 in the U.S. Subscription rates for twelve issues: $23.50 in the U.S., $25.50 in Canada, and $45.00 foreign rate. All payments must be in U.S. funds. The stories, incidents, and characters mentioned in this publication are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, without satiric content, are intended or should be inferred. The Badger, Clonezone and all prominent characters featured in this issue are trademarks of First Publishing, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to **Badger**, c/o First Publishing, Inc., 435 N. LaSalle, Chicago IL 60610.

A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

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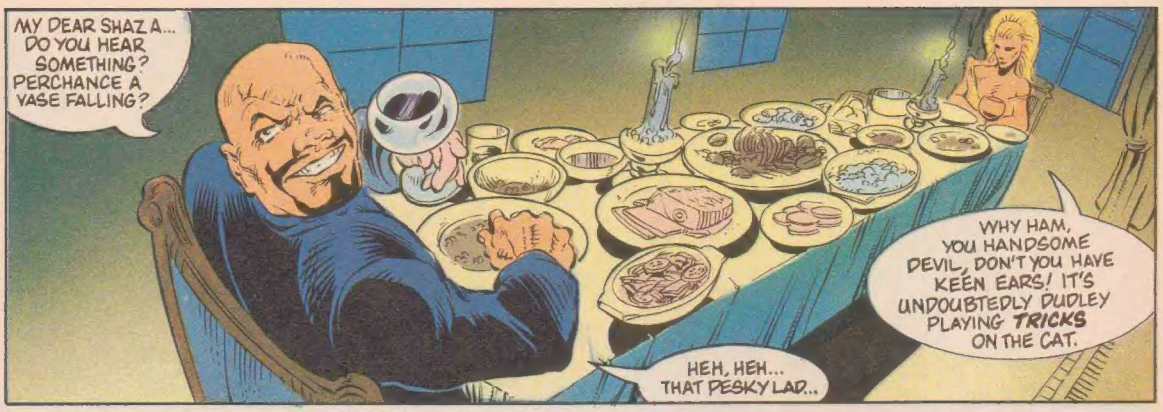
jim PACK — LETTERER
ian TETRAULT — COLORIST
mike BARON — EDITOR

HEY, A CHARGE OF BREAKING AND ENTERING I CAN HANDLE... MAYBE A FINE, PROBATION, COMMUNITY SERVICE... BUT HOW COME DEMONS ALWAYS COME UP WITH DEATH THREATS!?
NORBERT!
MORONIC VEEBLEFETZER! I WILL FEED YOUR GIZZARD TO ZABALA!
I HATE CANNIBALS...
ZABALA?
YESSS! ZABALA, LORD OF THE BLACK DOOR! AND SOON, RULER OF THIS PATHETIC WORLD!
WORLD DOMINATION? BUT THAT IS SO HACKNEYED, HONORED DEMON. EVERY BOND MOVIE HAS IT.
EAT THIS PAL! SEVEN YEARS BAD LUCK!
KRASH!
TINKLE!

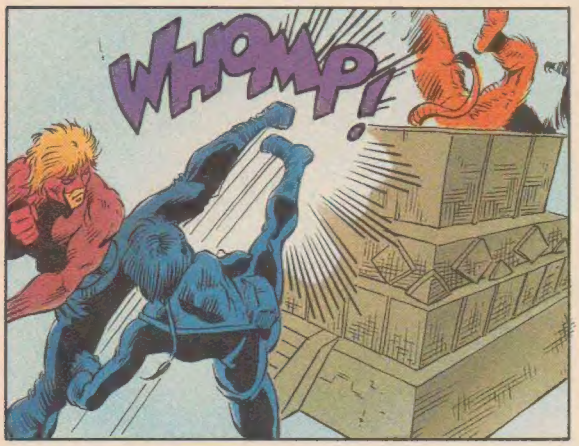
YOU GROW MORE PREPOSTEROUS BY THE MOMENT. YOU CAN'T BELIEVE THIS WILL STOP ME...?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW? HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL...
UF-DA!!
FWOP
THWAK
WOP
WHOMF

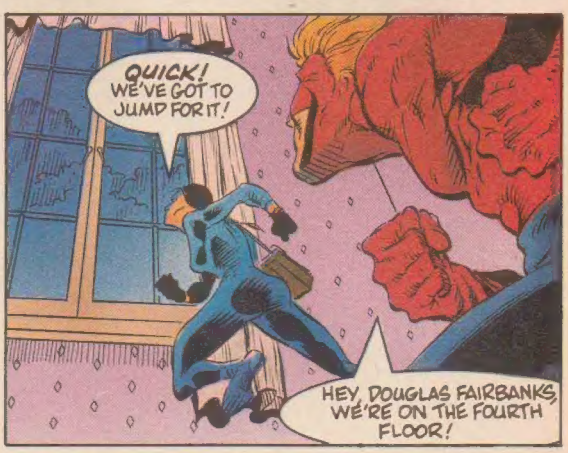

MY DEAR SHAZ A... DO YOU HEAR SOMETHING? PERCHANCE A VASE FALLING?
WHY HAM, YOU HANDSOME DEVIL, DON'T YOU HAVE KEEN EARS! IT'S UNDOUBTEDLY DUDLEY PLAYING TRICKS ON THE CAT.
HEH, HEH... THAT PESKY LAD...

SPEAKING OF PESKY... AND FRISKY LADS... IT'S NEARLY TIME FOR THAT DESSERT I PROMISED YOU...

EGAD, WOMAN... YOU MAKE A MAN'S NECK SWELL SO HIS TIE NEARLY STRANGLES HIM...

NOW, MAVIS! TOGETHER!

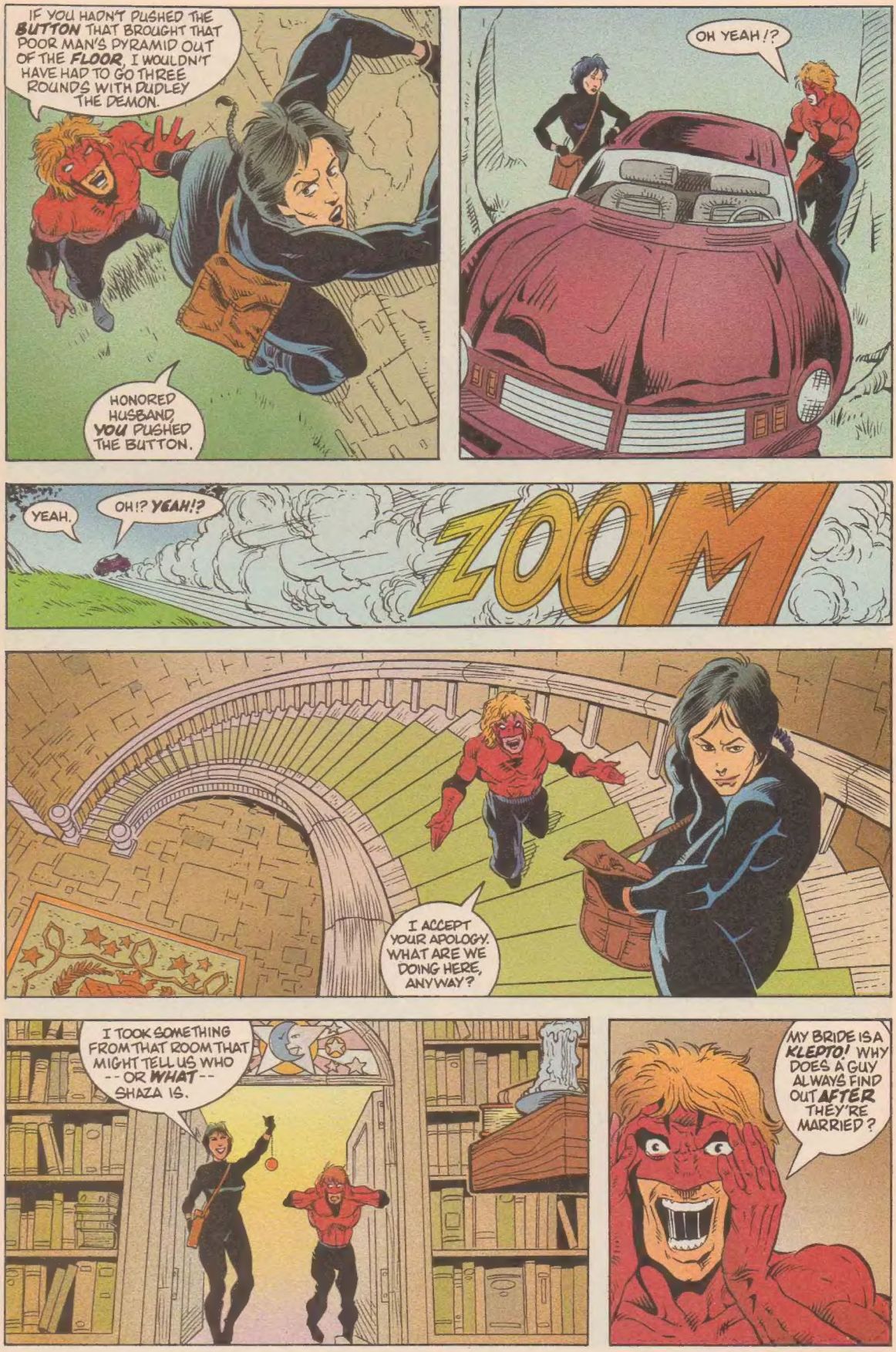

WHOMP!


QUICK! WE'VE GOT TO JUMP FOR IT!
HEY, DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, WE'RE ON THE FOURTH FLOOR!

SMASH!

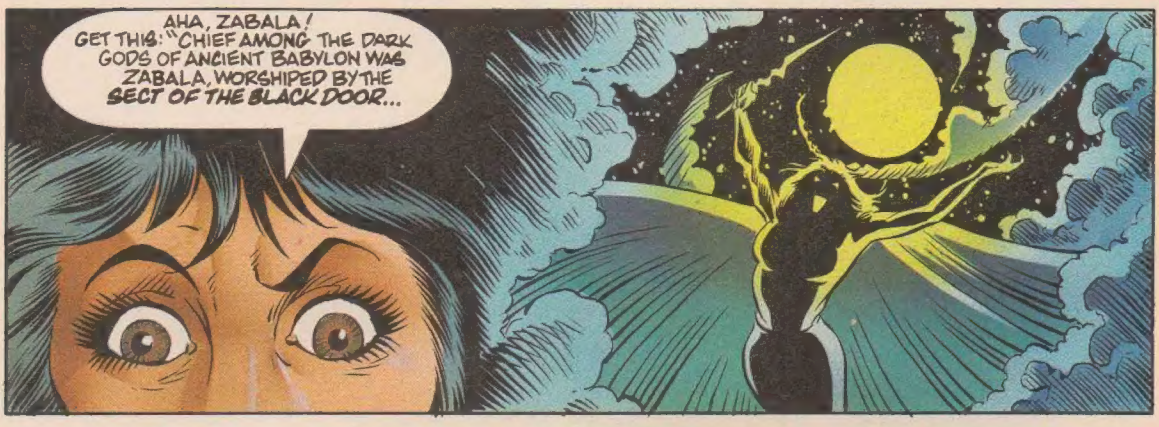
WHERE ARE THE PICADORES?
HANG ON, NORBERT!
KRAAK!
NORBERT?
WHY DON'T YOU FALL?!
GAK! FOOL... TRYING TO CHOKE A DEMON...
HONORED HUSBAND, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
HEY, I'M WORKING ON IT. DO YOU THINK I'M WINDOW SHOPPING OR SOMETHING...?
I'LL EAT YOUR HEART!
KRASSSHH!!

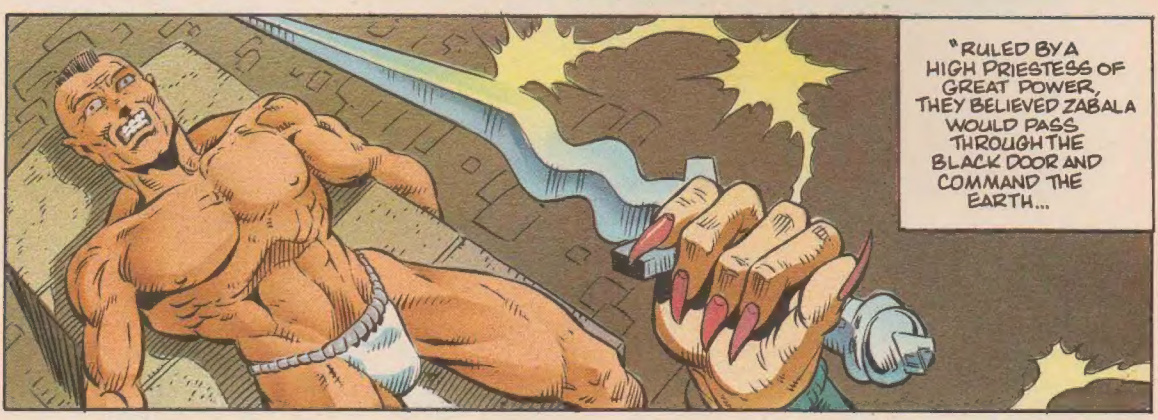
CRACK
KRA
SNAP
OOOF!
UNNGH!
KRA
SNAP
KRAK
FWOOP
WE'VE GOT TO GET HAM! HE'S SMACK DAB IN A NEST OF DEMONS!
WE CAN'T... NOT UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST. I'VE GOT TO CHECK SOMETHING IN HAM'S BOOKS...


IF YOU HADN'T PUSHED THE BUTTON THAT BROUGHT THAT POOR MAN'S PYRAMID OUT OF THE FLOOR, I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO GO THREE ROUNDS WITH DUDLEY THE DEMON.
HONORED HUSBAND, YOU PUSHED THE BUTTON.
OH YEAH!?
YEAH.
OH!? YEAH!?
ZOOM
I ACCEPT YOUR APOLOGY. WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE, ANYWAY?
I TOOK SOMETHING FROM THAT ROOM THAT MIGHT TELL US WHO -- OR WHAT -- SHAZA IS.
MY BRIDE IS A KLEPTO! WHY DOES A GUY ALWAYS FIND OUT AFTER THEY'RE MARRIED?

HMMM...
THESE THINGS ARE READY TO FALL APART! HAM'S GOTTA GO TO MICROFICHE, OR AT LEAST ACID-FREE PAPER.

LET'S SEE... ZOOMSCHWARTZ, ZIGGY, ZAZZBO...
WHAT DOES IT SAY? WHO IS THIS FLAKY BROAD?


AHA, ZABALA! GET THIS: "CHIEF AMONG THE DARK GODS OF ANCIENT BABYLON WAS ZABALA, WORSHIPED BY THE SECT OF THE BLACK DOOR...


"RULED BY A HIGH PRIESTESS OF GREAT POWER, THEY BELIEVED ZABALA WOULD PASS THROUGH THE BLACK DOOR AND COMMAND THE EARTH...

"...THIS COULD ONLY OCCUR WHEN HER SOUL-MATE WAS BEDDED AND SACRIFICED ON THE SEVENTH DAY OF COURTSHIP.

"CHRONICLES INDICATE SHE FAILED, DOOMING HER TO WAIT UNTIL SHE AND HER SOUL-MATE WOULD BE REINCARNATED TOGETHER!"
WOW!

YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS? SHAZA IS THAT MUCKETY-MUCK PRIESTESS AND SHE'S GONNA TAKE HAM TO THE ALTAR...
TONIGHT... UNLESS WE STOP HER.
SO, LET'S STOP HER.
NOT YET... SHE'S TOO POWERFUL TO TAKE ON BY OURSELVES...
SUIT YOURSELF! I'M NOT WAITING FOR OLD BALDY TO BECOME KIBBLED BITS!
IT SAYS HERE A BABYLONIAN PRIEST SUMMONED THE FIST OF AN-- A MYTHICAL DEMON HUNTER--BY SINGING THE WORST SONG IN THE WORLD BACKWARDS...
AHA! MY QUADDARA! IF YOU'RE GOING AFTER A MIDDLE-EAST DEMON, USE A MIDDLE-EAST BROADSWORD... A REAL PERSIAN POUNDER!
THE SWORD WON'T SAVE HAM! WE NEED THIS DEMON HUNTER!
WE NEED...
... THE WORST SONG IN THE WORLD... I HEARD YOU.
HAM'S GOT IT.
HE DOES!?!
YUP. RED SOVINE'S TRUCKING MUSIC. HAM LOVES THIS GARF.
"TEDDY BEAR" SHOULD DO THE TRICK.

WHAT IS A DRUID SORCERER DOING WITH TRUCKING MUSIC?
HEY, THERE'S NO ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE. PLAYING THIS BACKWARDS CAN ONLY IMPROVE THIS...
...NIKURT NO PEEK OG OUY SA, EEFFOC EMOS EEMMIG...
SNIFF SNIFF SMELL SOMETHING IN THE AIR?
OZONE... OR MAYBE SULFUR...?
...RAEB YDOBY, KCAB NO EMOC...EM OT KLAT...
KA-BOOM
WHO SUMMONS ME FROM ACROSS THE VOID...!?!

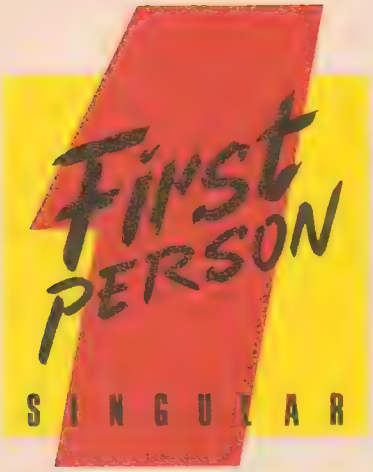
THE FIST OF AN!
AYE! I AM BADASSS THE DEMON HUNTER. YOU RANG?

THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT... EVEN BACKWARDS IT'S TERRIBLE...
BADASSS, WE NEED YOUR HELP. THE PRIESTESS OF THE BLACK DOOR HAS REAPPEARED. SHE MEANS TO KILL OUR FRIEND AND SUMMON ZABALA!

THIS IS FOUL NEWS. I PRESUME IT IS THE SEVENTH NIGHT? ARE SHAZAMAR AND THAT SORRY LOVER CIM GETTING IT ON AGAIN?

YEAH, BUT HE'S CALLED HAM NOW! AND AFTER HE GETS HIS MAIN SQUEEZE, HE'S GONNA DIE AND DEMONS ARE GONNA INVADE THE WORLD. IT'S WORSE THAN LORD WETERLACKUS!
WETERLACKUS? THAT FOODY? WELL, WHAT IS THE FASTEST WAY THERE?

I HAVE JUST THE TICKET! MAVIS, YOU AND BADASSS GET MY NINJA NETS, THEN MEET ME ON THE LAWN.



"There's a place for us, A-TIME and a place for us. Hold my hand and we're halfway there. Hold my hand and I'll take you there."

For Squalor, this is more than a lyric from *West Side Story*, it's a way of life. You see, Squalor can take you to a place, A-Time, where non-linear time is manifest. There, Quirks of Fate are real. Glitches exist.The future is malleable, and the past is as hard as stone.

It's dangerous, and Squalor is learning how to travel in it. There are some exciting benefits, and a few experiments that go terribly wrong.

But *because* he can travel to A-Time, Squalor is in danger. For he's not the only one who is traveling the time paths, and while he's looking for ways to benefit humanity, others find the temptation to affect the lives of *everyone* is too powerful to resist.

So, Squalor is the first line of defense against an unknown enemy, but he's not quite the figure to inspire confidence. He's a brilliant man who mumbles to himself, can't hold down a regular job, and who dresses mostly in army fatigue jackets and jeans.

But his looks belie a powerful hero. With a touch of his hand, he can stop a robber, or delve into a friend's subconscious to get to the source of his or her problems.

Squalor is an entertaining and thought-provoking comic by **Stefan Petrucha** and **Tom Sutton**: a great excursion into the unreal and the metaphysical.

Luckily, **Squalor** is being published in the slick First Fiction Premier Format, because Tom's doing some of his best work *ever*, and the colorist **Paul Mounts** is creating a beautiful fully-colored landscape on which **Squalor** is played out. It's a spectacular-looking and well-written series. Don't miss it.

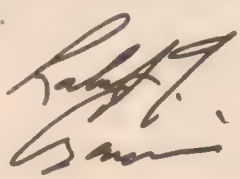
Speaking of spectacular-looking, the **Olivia 1990** calendar is also out this month with thirteen beautiful paintings of thirteen provocatively dressed women. Printed on high-gloss, high-quality paper, this is a terrific collectors' item.

There's even more stuff this month. Just look to the right for details, and in the months to come, we'll be publishing **The Nexus Files**: or *Everything you wanted to know about the Nexus Universe in one handy book*, **Demon Knight**: **John Ostrander** and **Flint Henry**'s all-new dark and gritty Grimjack graphic novel, the **Next Nexus** graphic novel collecting last year's dynamite limited series by **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude**, and more. But I'm running out of room, so I'll wrap it up here.

"Squalor is an entertaining and thought-provoking comic by Stefan Petrucha and Tom Sutton: a great excursion into the unreal and the metaphysical.

Before I bid you adieu, I suppose there are three or four of you out there who remember that this column was supposed to be reserved for Wade Roberts to write about our all-new **Classics Illustrated** line.

Well, I was wrong. It's next issue. Adieu.



FIRST IN AUGUST

Squalor #1: Squalor takes a trip into A-Time to stop a suicide. First Fiction, Premier Format. By **Stefan Petrucha** and **Tom Sutton**.

Olivia 1990 Calendar: featuring The sensual artwork of world-acclaimed artist **Olivia De Berardinis**.

Badger Goes Berserk #4: Badger bares his claws in his final showdown with Larry and the All-White Brotherhood. By **Mike Baron**, **Jeff Butler**, **Denys Cowan**, **Jay Geldhof**, **Mitch O'Connell**, **Walt Simonson**, **Spyder**, **Jill Thompson** and **Mike Zeck**.

Badger #54: Ham almost gets smoked by a sultry sorceress, but Badger pulls him out of the fire. By **Roger Salick**, **Tim Vigil** and **Jeff Albrecht**.

Sensei #4: Tadashi attacks Sandau, and Ken travels *back* in time to stop World War III. First Fiction, Premier Format By **Roger Salick**, **Val Mayerik**, **Bob Dvorak**, **Eric Vincent**, and **Gerald Forton**.

Nexus #63: Stan challenges Elvon while defending a Hellpop Clinic. By **Mike Baron** and guest artist **Greg Guler** and **Tom Baxa**.

Dreadstar #49: Diplomacy leads to murder on the eve of war. By **Peter David**, **Angel Medina**, and **Bob Dvorak**. Plus **Pawns** by **Jim Starlin** and **Daina Graziunas**.

Whisper #31: Whisper becomes the prey for her deadliest enemy. By **Steven Grant** and **Steve Epting**.

Grimjack #65: Twilly and the Man from Hell come to an uneasy truce to fight the Robotic Justices. By **John Ostrander** and **Flint Henry**.

Sable #22: Eden is kidnapped and Sable seeks his rival. By **Marv Wolfman** and **Al Bigley**

Lone Wolf & Cub #28: A woman's tender heart is destroyed. By **Kazuo Koike** and **Goseki Kojima**. Cover by **Matt Wagner**.

Nexus Legends #8: The Tialogue Trilogy concludes as Ashram is revealed. By **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude**.

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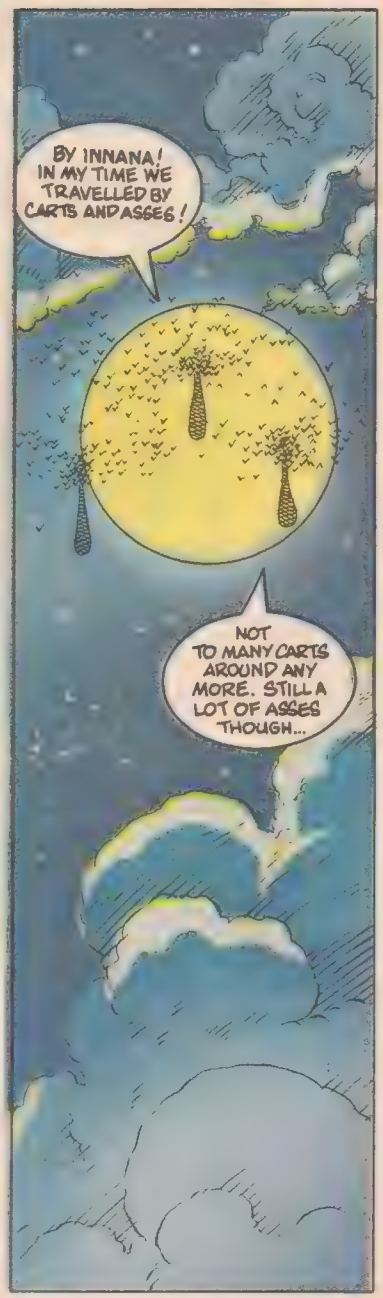
WHISPER

THE BEST CHOICE

NORBERT, WHAT ARE WE DOING?
THEY'LL BE EXPECTING US TO COME OVER THE WALL AGAIN. WE'RE GONNA SURPRISE 'EM.
WITH NETS?
WE MUST HASTEN BADGER... IT IS NEARLY MIDNIGHT! IF ZABALA IS SUMMONED HE WILL DEVOUR US ALL.

UNLAX... I DON'T INTEND TO BE A DEMON BURGER. STAND IN THE MIDDLE OF YOUR NETS, OUR RIDE IS A COMIN'...

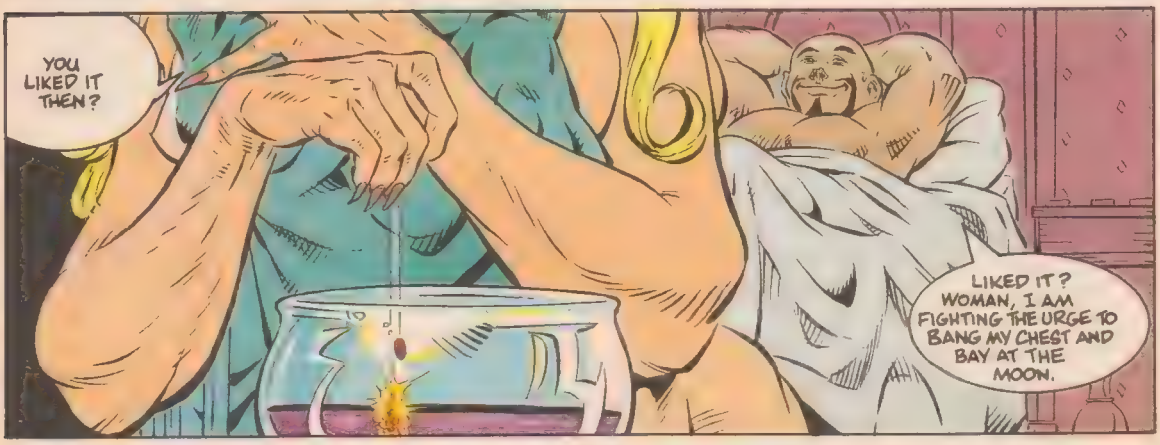
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
WHAT MADNESS IS THIS? BIRDS OF PREY?
BIG CHOICE... THEY CHARGE YOU AN ARM AND A LEG FOR AN ASSAULT HELICOPTER AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT.
STORM THE ZIGGURAT, LADS! AN EXTRA MOUSE FOR EVERY MAN-JACK O' YOU WHO PUTS THE PEDAL TO THE METAL!

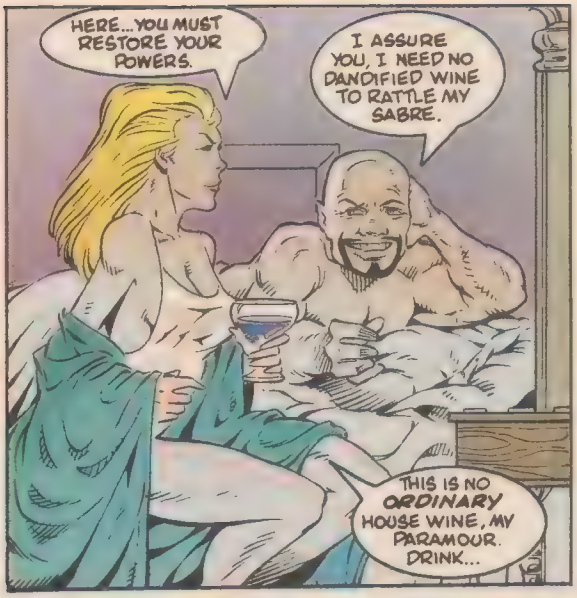

BY INNANA! IN MY TIME WE TRAVELLED BY CARTS AND ASSES!
NOT TO MANY CARTS AROUND ANY MORE. STILL A LOT OF ASSES THOUGH...

AHOY, LADDIES! THERE'S THE TARGET! TAKE 'ER IN LOW!

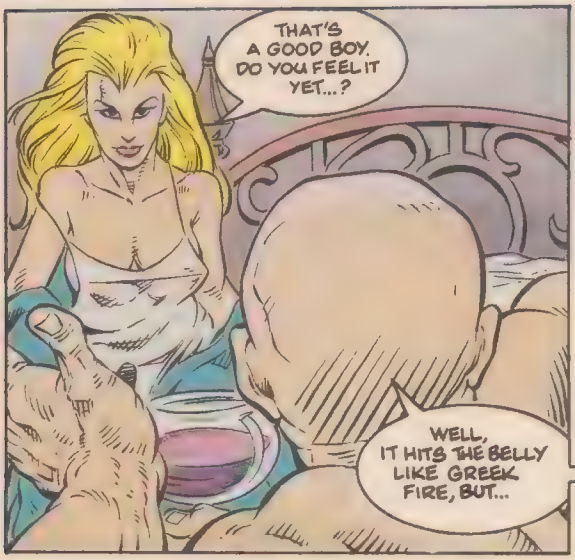
WE'VE GOT 'EM IN OUR SIGHTS...
BOMBS AWAY!

WELL ?
AH... A MAN FORGETS WHAT HE HAS BEEN MISSING, SHAZA...
EVEN THAT ?
ESPECIALLY THAT.

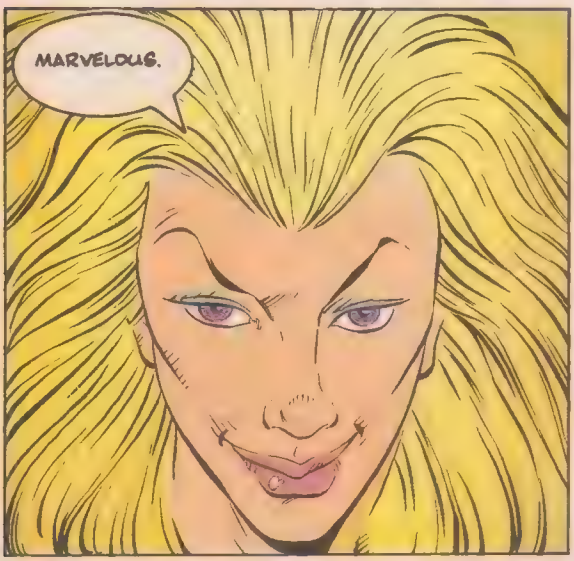

YOU LIKED IT THEN ?
LIKED IT ? WOMAN, I AM FIGHTING THE URGE TO BANG MY CHEST AND BAY AT THE MOON.


HERE...YOU MUST RESTORE YOUR POWERS.
I ASSURE YOU, I NEED NO DANDIFIED WINE TO RATTLE MY SABRE.
THIS IS NO ORDINARY HOUSE WINE, MY PARAMOUR. DRINK...

MARVELOUS BOUQUET ...GULP


THAT'S A GOOD BOY. DO YOU FEEL IT YET...?
WELL, IT HITS THE BELLY LIKE GREEK FIRE, BUT...

...OH... WAIT... METHINKS THE DE-ICER HAS SNUCK INTO THE FUEL LINE, MY DEAR...


MARVELOUS.

CLICK
WE ARE READY TO BEGIN, THEN.

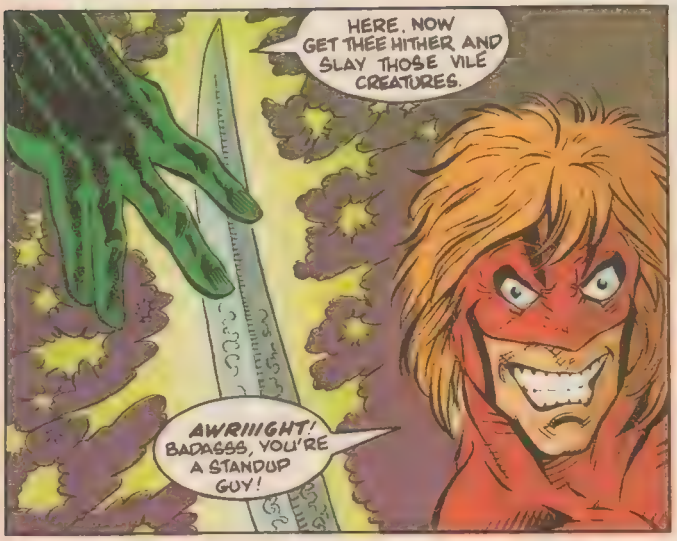
WHRRRR
LOOK, MY SOUL-MATE! AFTER FOUR THOUSAND YEARS, WE SHALL HAVE OUR MOMENT!
A WET BAR? I'LL HAVE A LEINENKUGEL...
AT LAST! THE BLACK DOOR SHALL BE PRIED OPEN!
ZABALA BECKONS!
GERONIMO!
CRASH

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, TOOTS. WE KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP TO, AND YOU'RE DEAD IN THE WATER. GIMME HAM!
INTERLOPERS!
SO, WITCH! WE MEET AGAIN!
BADASSS!?! HOW COULD YOU BE HERE...?
ZZZAMM!
BY VIRTUE OF THE WORST SONG IN THIS OR ANY OTHER AGE. YET IT MATTERS NOT...
BASH!
AHH... A WELCOME REMATCH WITH THE FOOLISH ONE AND HIS WOMAN...
DUDLEY! ASSIST ME!
VRRRRT!

FOOLISH! WHO'RE YOU CALLING NAMES... DUDLEY?
TASTE PERSIAN STEEL, YOU POXY SUCKER!
WHAT ODD PIG STICKER IS THIS?

BAP!

HEY, BADASSS! MY DEADLY PERSIAN BLADE ISN'T HACKING IT!


HERE. NOW GET THEE HITHER AND SLAY THOSE VILE CREATURES.
AWRIIIGHT! BADASSS, YOU'RE A STANDUP GUY!

YOWSAH!
MAKES THE SINGING SWORD LOOK LIKE AN HORS D'OEUVRE TOOTHPICK.

NEXT...?
NEXUS!
NEXUS
NUMBER 64
by MIKE BARON,
TONY AKINS
AND STEVE HUSTON
COMING IN
SEPTEMBER
FROM
FIRST
COMICS

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE
THE ANIMALS ARE COMING OUT TO PLAY!
WORLD GONE CRAZY!
BY STEVEN GRANT AND VINCENT GIARRANO
BEGINNING IN OCTOBER IN Whisper 33-37
FIRST COMICS

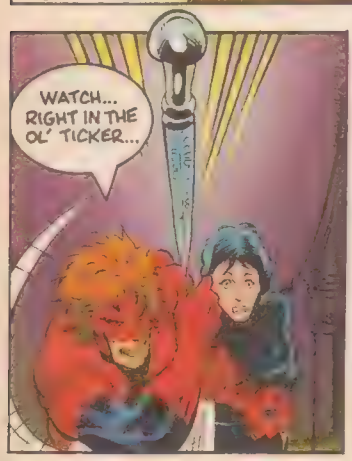
I CAN MAKE MANY OF THOSE!
SCRUTCH!
WHOOOOSH!
SLASH!
YOU KNOW YOU NEED A LICENSE TO CUT HAIR IN WISCONSIN?
HAR! THE MARK OF ZABALA!
ZZT!
ZZT!
ZZT!
PISSER! ANOTHER SHIRT!
SKRING!

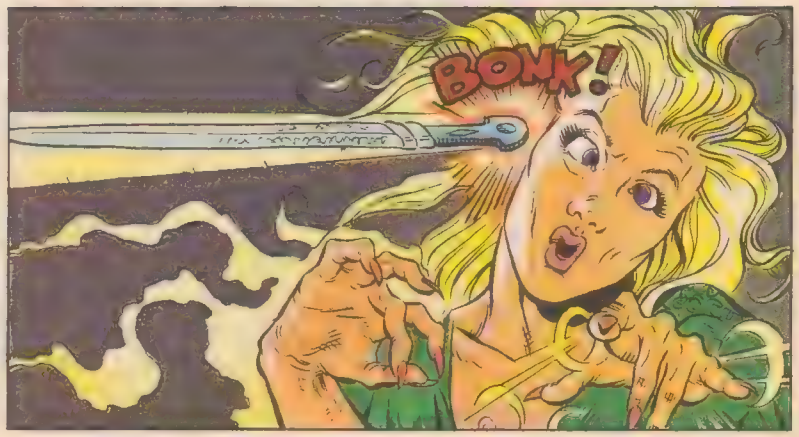
ANY LAST WISHES?
YEAH... I'LL TAKE AN ADVANCED COMBAT RIFLE WITH MAGIC BULLETS...

A JOKE, YES? THIS IS GOOD. STUPID HUMANS LIKE TO DIE LAUGHING...

SLASH!
WELL, ABOUT TIME!

NORBERT, WE'VE GOT TO HELP BADASSS!
GIMME THAT THANG. I CAN HIT A HALF-DOLLAR AT TWENTY PACES.
KA POW!


WATCH... RIGHT IN THE OL' TICKER...


BONK!

A MAGNIFICENT SHOT, BADGER.
THANKS. I PLANNED IT THAT WAY.
THERE... SHAZA IS NO MORE.
Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z
LATER...
WELL, HAM, IT BEATS THE HECK OUT OF THE HEARTBURN THAT YOUR GIRLFRIEND HAD FIGURED FOR YOU.
EGAD.. THAT DRINK IS GOING TO GIVE ME A HANGOVER THAT WON'T QUIT.
WE'RE REAL SORRY THIS DIDN'T WORK OUT FOR YOU.
SAVE YOUR PITY, MY DEAR... I WAS PLAYED LIKE A JEW'S HARP, AND DESERVED IT FOR BEING SO STUPID.
WELL, FRIEND BADGER, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE GOING.
BADASSS, YOU'RE ONE BAD ASS WHEN IT COMES TO KICKING DEMONS. SORRY TO SEE YOU HIT THE TRAIL.
I SUPPOSE I'VE GOT TO PLAY "TEDDY BEAR" THE REGULAR WAY TO SEND YOU BACK, HUH?
"TEDDY BEAR"!? HMMM... I'D FORGOTTEN ABOUT THAT...
I'LL CONSOLE MYSELF BY HIRING AWAY THAT CHEF OF HERS...
I'VE BEEN THINKING... PERHAPS I'LL STICK AROUND THIS CENTURY FOR A WHILE.

Jingle-Jingle

Written by Mike Baron
Illustrated by Philip Hester and Tom Baxa

The man in the grey silk suit stepped out of the heat into a rental car shack located on the fringe of a Midwest regional airport. The only other occupant was a tall, heavy-set man with mutton chops and a bald dome, wearing a blue three-piece pin-stripe, smoking a Marlboro, and hefting a brown leather briefcase. He spied the man in the silk suit and rolled his eyes. "She just left to get mine, and I've been here 45 minutes."

The man in the silk suit jingled the change in his pocket. He had wavy blond hair swept back in a glazed pompadour, and emanated Crabtree and Evelyn Cologne for Men. "Damn," he said. "Damn, damn, damn." He grimaced at a radio on a shelf that was playing earnest, generic FM rock. "I've got a tenth-row seat for 'La Boheme' in an hour. I hate to walk in late. I positively loathe it."

"I know what you mean," said the tall bald guy. "I travel a lot and there isn't a rental outfit in the country that won't screw you up just when you need it the most. Especially at these rinky-dink regional airports. What kind of opera do they have in a burg like this anyway?"

"Very good. Rutertown has a surprisingly active classical community. They've a first-rate civic orchestra, considering their size and distance from New York, and an aggressively traditional chorale. The regional college is a plus." The man removed a sterling silver cigarette case, extracted an English Oval, and began tamping it against the case.

The bald gut proffered a gold butane lighter. "Ernest Jenkins is my name."

The blond guy inhaled little sips of smoke. "Max Swell. How do you do?" They shook hands.

"I'm in advertising," Jenkins said. "Musical stuff."

Swell arched an eyebrow. "Really? What kind of music do you prefer?"

"I like all sorts of stuff. Dixieland, polka, reggae... but as a child of the sixties, naturally I prefer the great music of that generation. The Beatles, the Beach Boys, the Rascals. If you knew my work, you'd know what I like. What's your line, Max?"

Swell jingled his change and sipped his cigarette. "I don't have a line. I inherited wealthy parents." Sip-sip, jingle-jingle.

"Must be nice."

"It is. Very nice. It leaves me free to pursue my interests, which include the theatre and the opera. Damn, damn, damn. I specified a Lincoln town car and now I have this creeping feeling that they're going to give me a Tempo. Just the thing to take to the opera, don't you think?"

"Yeah, yeah – I ordered a new Cougar XR-7 and she's getting me a Sable. So don't

hold your breath." The radio stopped churning out soft rock and switched to an oven cleaner commercial which used a tune purchased from the vast library of music owned and operated by Michael Jackson. 'That's one of mine!" Jenkins exulted, turning up the volume. "Remember? This was a big hit for the Coasters."

Swell sipped and jingled. "No, can't say I do."

"Really. Where have you been hiding? The moon?"

"Not far from it. Wisconsin, actually. I don't have much interest in popular song, I'm afraid. Not since Cole Porter died."

"You've heard of the Beatles?" Jenkins asked, as if to ascertain that Swell was truly human.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah."

"The Beach Boys?"

"I get around."

"You ever hear of Shout laundry additive? I'm the guy who got the rights to the Beatles' 'Twist and Shout.'"

Swell expelled a perfect smoke ring. "No," he declared drily.

"Oh yeah. And I'm the guy who got the rights to 'Jane's Getting Serious Now' for the Heinz Ketchup account. And 'I Heard It Through the Grapevine' for the California Raisin Growers' Association. 'You Are the Sunshine of My Life' for the Florida Citrus Growers' Association. Yessir — I'm the man they call when they want to tap in to all those thirtysomething yupster bucks."

Swell blew more smoke rings and jingled his change. "Nope, sorry. Don't know those songs."

Jenkins slapped his face in astonishment, plopped his briefcase down on the counter and sprung the gold locks. He took out a cassette and handed it to Swell. "Here — take a listen to this when you get a chance. My greatest hits. I guarantee you you'll recognize these tunes — I hope to God, for the money that goes into them. I'll tell you this — Pete Townsend isn't kicking about the deal we struck for 'I Can See For Miles.'" Nike shoes? 'Revolution' — I'm the man. 'Jump' for Bounce fabric softener. And my latest masterpiece, 'Cheese, Cheese, Cheese,' based on the classic James Brown song for Burger King. Take it — it's yours. Got my name and address on the side, see? That's my business card."

"'What about reggae? Surely the dulcet tones and soft Carribean rhythms speak to some portion of your poet's soul.'

'The creeping kudzu of popular music,' Swell replied with contempt."

Swell took the cassette as if it were medical waste and dropped it in his jacket pocket. "Thank you, I'm sure. Where's the girl? Where's my car? I've got an opera in fifty minutes!"

"It's too bad, I was so steamed at being kept waiting, I lost my cool earlier and yelled at the girl. If I hadn't done that I might have tried to pick her up — she's cute. What the hell, she hasn't met you yet. You've got a chance."

"Thank you for that bit of information, but I'm afraid I've made my plans."

Jenkins shrugged. "Your loss. Got to admit, I'm not much on opera. All those fat ladies, know what I mean?" he winked. "I mean, give me some good Dixieland any day."

"Tired old farts swilling riffs that should have been put to death in the forties."

"You don't mince words. I like that. What about reggae? Surely the dulcet tones and soft Carribean rhythms speak to some portion of your poet's soul."

"The creeping kudzu of popular music," Swell replied with contempt. "Where's the

bloody clerk? This is the last time I shall use this agency."

"Afraid you don't have a choice in some places. They've got a lock on the local franchise — nothing you can do. So basically you like classical, is that what you're saying?"

"That's what I'm saying. And while I admire your commercial achievements, I must admit that the names and tunes you cited are little more to me than cultural back-drop. Mere buzz-words. I have never listened to the popular radio, for it represents nitwits, Philistines, and the great God Mammon and, if I may say so, your own success points to the unholy alliance between popular song and commerce."

'Well, excuse me, Max, but what do you think radio is? It's a business! And pop music? It's a business! Don't let anyone tell you rock and roll is a means of social protest or something that's going to change the world. All it is is product. Same's true for most of that classical stuff. Half those guys wrote their material on demand to please a rich patron. It was the only way they could make a living, I'm not condemning them."

"You're a wise man."

"Fact is, I love the classics. I may not know much about them, but I know what sells. And all that stuff's in the public domain! You latch onto a hot classic and we're talking instant sales. Look what I did with Beethoven's Fifth and Bide-a-wee Baby Diapers!"

Swell stopped jingling the change in his pocket. "What are you talking about?"

"That's right — you don't listen to the radio. You probably don't watch television. How would you know? I wouldn't expect you to know. Yup, du-du-du-dum...du-du-du-dum...the baby's wet, the mommy's hot, we're in a jam!" he sang to the opening bars of Beethoven's 'Fifth Symphony,' unaware of the horror creeping over Swell's face. "And if you like that, you'll love what we've done with Schumann's 'Rhenish Symphony' and Sea Biscuit Dog Food — it's a natural!"

"The Rhenish Symphony?'" Swell asked in a choked voice.

JINGLE-JINGLE BY MIKE BARON

"You okay there, Max? Want a drink of water?"

"No water! 'Rhenish Symphony!' Sea Biscuit Dog Food!"

"Max, you look interested! Would you like to hear it? I imagine that you would! I have it right here on my classical sampler." He rummaged through the briefcase and emerged triumphant with a cassette and a Buick-like grin. He popped the cassette into the shelf radio and became absorbed in finding the appropriate selection among the various commercial jingles based on the works of classical composers. Finally the appropriate selection was queued up and began to fill the small office with a chorus of barking dogs set to Schumann's score.

"It was my idea to use the dogs," Jenkins admitted, turning toward his new-found friend with pride. He was unprepared for the fist which flattened his nose like an overripe banana. Jenkins slumped to the floor with his back against the counter, blood streaming down his face and into his light blue shirt.

"Wha'd you do that for?" he asked in a state of shock. The mild-mannered opera lover had disappeared, replaced by a snarling maniac who was frantically ripping the tie from around his neck.

"I don't know what to do, Larry! I-I-I-I-I've never confronted such a hideous evil before! I've never faced so disgusting a menace! I don't know whether to puke or throw up! You've caused so much misery, Larry... there's really nothing I could do that would match your crimes."

Jenkins began to scrabble backwards along the floor toward the door. "Stay away from me! Help! Police! Somebody!"

"God help me, Larry. I've been a bad boy." The Badger whirled and kicked Jenkins, whose ass lifted six inches as he crashed through the wooden counter. Badger whirled and struck him again with the heel of his shiny black shoe. Jenkins slumped to the floor unconscious.

The door swung open. A pert blond

holding a set of keys entered, accompanied by a blast of heat. She stared at the hole in the counter. She stared at the Badger who was disheveled and maniacal-looking despite the silk suit.

"Where is Mr. Jenkins?" she said cautiously, as if participating in a spelling bee.

"Mr. Jenkins was unaccountably called to account. I am Mr. Sykes. Do you have car for me?"

The clerk peered cautiously around the counter and spied Jenkins' sprawled form. "Oh my god!" she shrieked. "What happened to him?"

"You won't believe this, miss, but he went berserk. Nutso! First he jumped me with that damn briefcase — thing's carrying about a ton of hot plastic! Then he tried to jimmy open your safe. I had to hit him."

Badger took the keys out of the clerk's hand. "You won't believe this, Miss, but he went berserk. Nutso! First he jumped me with that damn briefcase — thing's carrying about a ton of hot plastic! Then he tried to jimmy open your safe. I had to hit him! I had to stop him! Don't you see? Do you have a car for me?"

"I'm sorry, the only car I could dig up is for Mr. Jenkins..."

"Look, lady, Jenkins is kaput. You've got to call the cops and an ambulance and have the sorry sucker put away because he's a menace to society, and I'm going to have to take Jenkins' Sable to get after the rest of the perps, *capiche*? You know, I have a friend named Sable and that's all he drives."

"I'm sorry," The young woman said. "I wasn't able to get a Sable. the only car I could locate was a Ford Escort, which just came in. We haven't even had time to wash it."

"I'll take it. *Ciao.* Gotta go." The Badger dashed out of the rental car office and into a beige Escort parked in front. It was hot and reeked of stale cigarette smoke. Badger started her up, slid back the seat and chirped out, careening toward the freeway.

He had no idea where he was or where he was going. His previous memory had been of lying down to sleep with a family of coyotes in the Baraboo Hills. He surmised that one of the other personalities — Max, most likely — had awakened and taken over.

There was always the radio, a possible source as to his location. He switched it on. A chorus of ersatz Rascals began to sing the praises of margarine to the tune of 'It's a Beautiful Morning.' Whining through clenched teeth, the Badger twisted the wheel violently. The dirty Escort jumped the meridian, wallowed down a concrete apron, through a section of chain-link fence already damaged by fundamentalist Moslem terrorists intent on blowing up a domestic commercial airliner, and onto a runway where he found himself directly in the path of a Delta 737 bound for take-off. "Delta!" the Badger exclaimed. "There's a clue!"

He had not raced midgets in his youth for nothing. With a panache born of an imperfect understanding of physics, Badger whipped the wheel first one way, then the other, sending the dirty little Escort into a series of pirouettes.

The people who brought you last issue were:

Roger Salick: writer
Tim Vigil: pencils
Denis Rodier: inker
Clem Robins: letterer
Ray Murtaugh: colorist
Bob Garcia: editor

Since we have had two Badger series running for the last few months, I thought this would be a great issue to print some of the response we've been getting from both series.

Dear Larry;

Well, Tim Vigil's pencils and layouts were nice. It's always a pleasure to have backgrounds in every picture. The inking wasn't anywhere near as detailed as when Tim does it himself. The main characters looked cartoon-y, and I had to look closely to see Tim's style at all. But enough of this art critique. The colors were great and the story was FUN. I hope they invite Norbert back for Tinku next year.

As for the short fiction, here and in *Dreadstar*, well... it's not really what I wanted. I like the combination of story and art; it's why I buy comics. My interests literature-wise don't include super heroics. I wouldn't care to see a comics version of James Joyce's *Ulysses* either. Or a comic strip with panels by Vincent Van Gogh. It was a good story by Mike, but I prefer comics in my comic books.

I almost forgot to say that Roger Salick writes a Badger story just fine. Right in character and CRAZY in the honored tradition of Mike Baron.

What does Mavis think about her hubby eating bat guano sandwiches before bed?

Charlie Harris
2657 N. Mountain
Tucson, AZ 85719

Why do you think Badger woke up in a garage?

Well, I guess you *won't be picking up our* **Classics Illustrated**, *this January with work by Bill Sienkiewicz, Kyle Baker, Gahan Wilson, etc. Hmmm?*

Dear Buckies;

Gee, when you promised a Mike Baron Badger short story, I didn't expect a *real* short story. But except for two illustrations and an occasional clawmark, that's what I found in **Badger** #52. "The Man in the Grey Silk Suit" didn't quite capture Badger in action — he's a very visual hero, and he needs a Butler, Reinhold, Lim, and/or Vigil to bring him to full uf-da life — but the conclusion in the castle made up for that. Ham and Norbert were in good form. However, given the rarity of the wiesbladen, would Badger have let Ham sacrifice it?

"Tinku," the lead story, was my introduction to two new artists: Tim Vigil and Denis Rodier. I liked their work on the unhappy Badger and their Mavis, if more American Indian that Southeast Asian, was lovely. Their Pachamama, on the other hand, resembled a certain Verdant Villainess over at Detective Comics comics.

However, Roger Salick's script threw in certain details that should have made for a better tale: he built up the Tinku and Tora Tora through the waiter and the mayor; he gave us Santos and Tremas; and he brought the Sykeses south so that Mavis could pursue some aromatic research. Yet what we had, when all was said and done, was just a lot of slugging, and a strange Goddess of the Earth who suddenly decided to pick a champion.

Wacky though the action in **Badger** can be, it usually has the same kind of demented coherence as its eponymous hero: it makes sense to itself, if not to the reader. "Tinku" didn't, but I still expect great things from Roger's last two issues of **Badger** and **Sensel**.

Charles J. Sperling
37-15 Parsons Blvd.
Flushing, NY 11345

RE: BGB: "Astonishing how you were able to make all of these seemingly disparate styles mesh together so perfectly. This has the earmarks of being one of the most enjoyable mini-series of the year."

I don't think Roger's last two issues of Badger could *have let you down, Charles. And if you haven't picked up* Sensei, *you're missing great martial arts action with one man pitted against large post-holocaust mutant scum and small-minded rootin'-tootin' frontiersmen.*

Dear Larry,

I really like the title of **Badger** #53; "Behind the Black Door." The rest of the comic is also terrific. It certainly looks like Ham is finally getting a taste of his own medicine. He certainly deserves to be sacrificed. I never like seeing him cut off the heads of animals; *his* sacrifices are cruel and obscene.

Michael Leon
47 Jean Avenue
Hempstead, NY 11550

There's just no tolerance for alternate lifestyles anymore.

Dear Larry;

The reason I'm writing this letter is because last night Badger came to me in a dream and showed me my destiny.

I'm destined to write a letter to your fun letters column, have it printed, and win a blender.

Please don't deny me my destiny.

Sparky
2113 Chestnut St.
Harrisburg, PA 17104

Right, on one and two. Wrong on three. Destiny denied. Next:

Dear Badger Folks,

I'm writing this to tell you I much disagree with what you are doing. You write about a guy who beats up street scum and demons from hell, but all this is make-believe.

There are, however, aggressive men-of-action citizens like myself who really do go and beat up street scum and demons.

So while you guys sit in your own little world fantasizing about some nut who talks to animals, (pant) I'll be out there kicking the snot out of real evil!

P.S. See you in Hell!

Giles "Brass Knuckles" Krill
2205 Bellevue Rd.
Harrisburg, PA 17104

Yet another blatant ploy by a Pennsylvanian to get his letter into print.

Dear Larry and Friends;

I have only been with the Badger since issue #49 and tried it because a friend suggested it. Was I glad I did. Larry, this comic is really fresh. It is outstanding. And that wife of Badger looks just like... well, what a babe!

Seriously, though (does this letter column ever get serious?) the Badger's demented mind does, in fact, give this book the edge over the other books I like. I read 32 different comics a month, plus another 10 or so regularly, and none of them portrays the psychotic mind in the way that this book does. Badger is almost a parody of things too serious to be funny in real life.

Another thing that appeals to me in this book is the realistic portrayal of the martial arts. I have been in the martial art of Tae Kwon-Do for over four years now, and many of the moves I have seen in this book, I have seen my instuctors do as well. And in both places those moves look spectacular.

Well, it looks like you have yourself another regular reader. Keep up the good job. This book appeals to me because of its unbalance between humor and seriousness, though it contains both. And even though I can deal with Norbert's gay personality, it makes me miss the good old days when men were men, women served men, and men drank too much beer, smoked too many cigarettes, and had those great macho contests to see who could throw cowchips the farthest.

Madman Matt

Dear Mr. Doyle and Mr. Garcia,

A few quick thoughts about your new mini-series, **Badger Goes Berserk!**:

It was, of course, a given that I would be collecting this series since my appreciation for the monthly Badger book is unchallengeable. What I didn't suspect is how much I'd enjoy it when it did come out.

I knew that the Badger's assorted multiple personalities were all going to pop up and say howdy, but I didn't realize that we would meet the man (or men) responsible for them, or that we would at last find out who "Larry" is. This first issue did both, which automatically makes it one of the most important Badger stories ever told.

And the artwork! Astonishing how you were able to make all of these seemingly disparate styles mesh together so perfectly. This has the earmarks of being one of the most enjoyable mini-series of the year, and there's already been a lot of stiff competition so far, what with Comico's *The Amazon* and DC's forthcoming *Hawkworld*, not to mention *The Crow* from young upstart Caliber Press... all very impressive. Starring as it does an already popular character, your own efforts with the Badger limited series may tend to get overshadowed in the realms of fan adulation, but it won't be because you didn't give it a real good shot. I can say that much.

What more can I say except, congratulations on yet another triumph?

David Peattie
4517 Birch Bark Rd.
Concord, CA 94521

Dear Larry,

Yo! Badger rules! I love the idea of his split personality and especially Mike Baron's portrayal in **Badger Goes Berserk!** I really enjoy being able to view so many great and different art styles in one issue. Denys Cowan's cover for BGB #1 sticks in my mind as one of my favorite pieces of Badger art. I am really looking forward to Flint Henry's Badger rendition on **BGB** #3. I love his Grimjack work.

On **Badger**, Tim Vigil is a great artist, but in my opinion Ron Lim is the definitive Badger artist. Well, keep up the great work... see ya.

Jeremy Maniloff
1229 Evergreen Dr.
Richardson, TX 75080

(No salutation)

Oh, excuse me. I must have the wrong letter column.

Art Crosby
5200 Robinwood Rd.
Louisville, KY 40218

And on that note, we end another fun-filled Badger letter column.

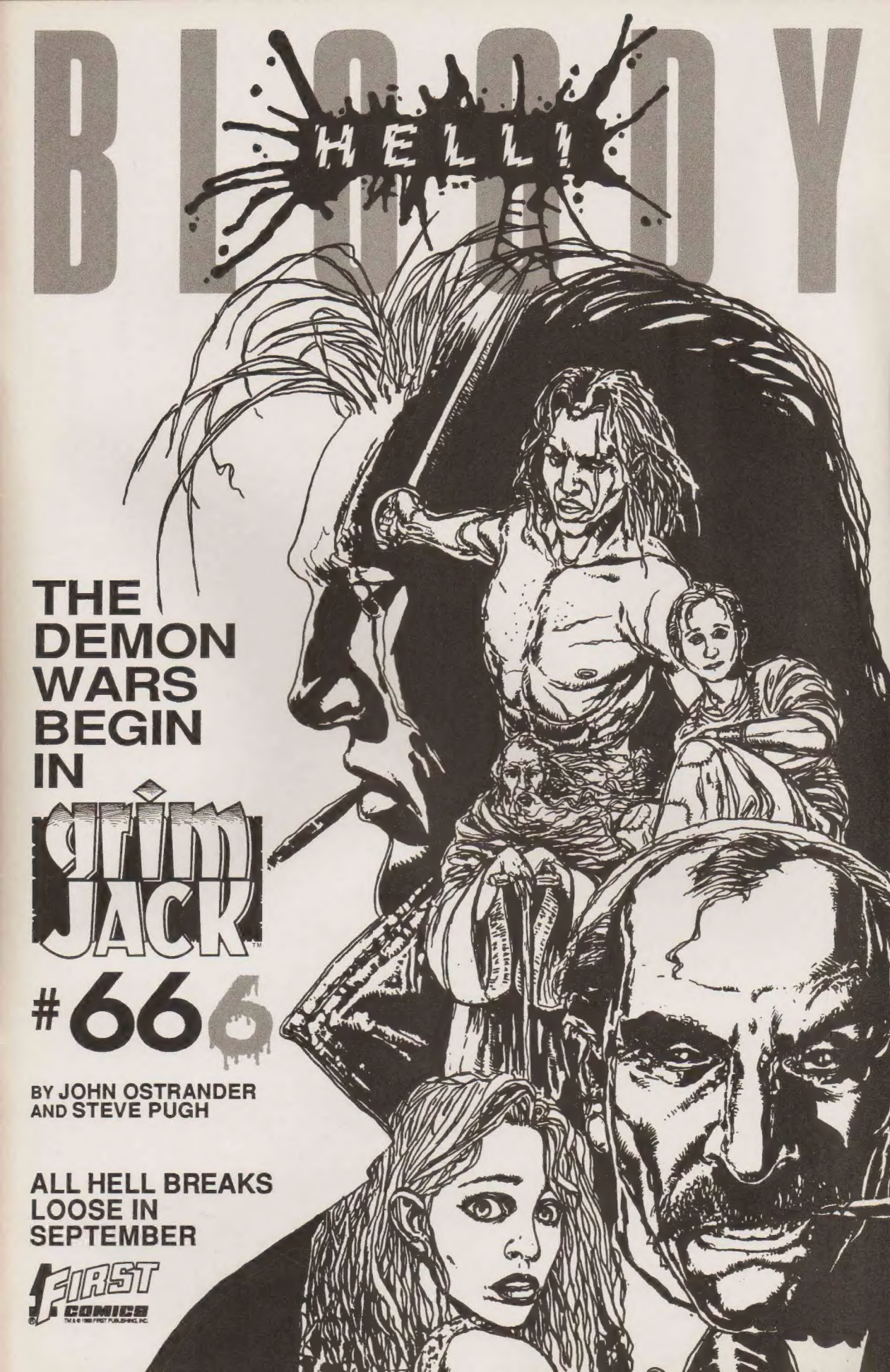
*Sad to say, **Tim Vigil** will not be back next issue. He's going on to other books. Doing covers for* **Sable** *#23-#27 for one, and maybe, just maybe, something else more First Fiction-y. And maybe, you just heard about it here first.*

***Roger Salick** is moving on to work with **Mike Baron** and **Steve Epting** on the new Judah the Hammer limited series **Hammer of God**, which premieres this October. But you can still catch the last issues of **Sensei**, if you hurry.*

*Next issue, **Mike Baron** returns with the new Badger artist, **Spyder**, to bring you a tale of the Badger, a serum, a monster, and a monstrous plot in "Thunder Lizard."*

Next Issue: Badger takes a road trip to British Columbia in "Thunder Lizard" by **Mike Baron**, **Spyder** and **Denis Rodier**.

In **Badger Goes Berserk #4**: The final confrontation of Badger, Larry, Jessie, et. al. By **Mike Baron** and **Jeff Butler, Denys Cowan, Jay Geldhof, Mitch O'Connell, Walt Simonson, Spyder, Jill Thompson,** and **Mike Zeck.**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